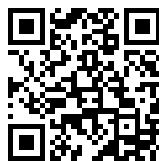
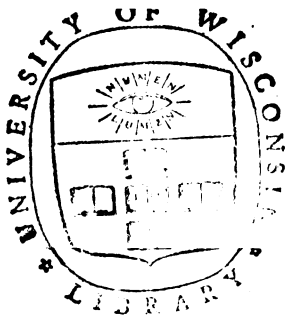

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PROSERPINE

A MASQUE

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A MASQUE

BY

MAURICE BARING

AUTHOR OF 'MAHASENA,' 'DESIDERIO,' ETC.

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Καὶ ποθήω καὶ μάομαι

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À MADAME BULTEAU.

PERSONS OF THE MASQUE.

PROSERPINE, *disguised as* ROSEMARY.

KING PHARAMOND.

THE PRINCESS (*his daughter*).

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

ROSALIND.

HEARTSEASE (*a dairymaid*).

A MONK.

A MERCHANT.

A SOLDIER.

A JUGGLER.

A SHEPHERD.

AN OLD MAN.

A SQUIRE.

Soldiers, Courtiers, Maidens, Ghosts.

Place : Sicily.

Time : Indefinite.

PROSERPINE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

SICILY. *A grove in a cirque of purple mountains. On the LEFT is a doric temple built of golden coloured marble. Behind it a large clump of cypress trees. On the RIGHT a sloping hill also crowned with cypresses. The grass is bright with anemones and spring flowers.*

CHORUS OF MAIDENS *enter R. and cross the stage singing. They are dressed in many-coloured draperies and wear garlands of flowers, and bear branches of blossom in their hands.*

CHORUS.

Where does the Queen of the Fairies dwell ?
East of the sun and west of the moon :
Whisper her name by the wishing well,
Curtsey and dance to the tinkling tune.

B

Why is her garland of petals red ?
East of the sun and west of the moon :
They grew in the sunless fields of the dead,
Curtsey and dance to the tinkling tune.

Why is she pale as the marble stone ?
East of the sun and west of the moon :
Never a sun on the sable throne ;
Curtsey and dance to the tinkling tune.

Why is her sceptre an asphodel ?
East of the sun and west of the moon :
They gave it her once in the halls of Hell ;
Curtsey and dance to the tinkling tune.

Speak the word to be said at the shrine,
East of the sun and west of the moon :
Call on her name that is Proserpine ;
Curtsey and dance to the tinkling tune.

Why with the faëry folk doth she dwell ?
East of the sun and west of the moon :
Oh ! dark for Heaven, and bright for Hell !
Curtsey and dance to the tinkling tune.

THE PRINCE.

What festival, fair maidens, do you keep ?
What deity of forest, field or stream,
Receives the homage of your minstrelsy ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

We dwell in yonder village, and our song
Is one of welcome to the new-born spring.

*(The Maidens walk into the temple, except
LILY OF THE VALLEY, who remains
behind).*

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

The shadows deepen ; after set of sun
This place for mortal man is perilous.

THE PRINCE.

What is this haunt of dark mysterious things ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

The place is consecrate to Proserpine ;
From immemorial time the sanctuary
Gleams in the shadow of the cypress trees.

THE PRINCE.

Doth priest or priestess worship Proserpine ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

The temple is deserted ; never a priest
Upon the altar offers sacrifice :
See, the grass grows upon the crumbling steps ;
The swallows build beneath the cornices,
And unmolested in the mossy porch
The lizard basks and listens to our song.

THE PRINCE.

But wherefore did you sing a festal chant ?
And wherefore are you garlanded with flowers ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

We maidens still in the mute sanctuary
Pay homage to the goddess of the spring.
The village folk avoid the lonely place ;
They say that he who after set of sun
Lingers here, falls beneath a deadly spell.

THE PRINCE.

A spell ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

The witchery of Proserpine.

THE PRINCE.

And he who is bewitched ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

Untimely dies.

THE PRINCE.

But you are not afraid ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

Queen Proserpine
Is favourable to our minist'ring.
We are her trustful slaves, she harms us not.
We fear not even though the village tales

Of hauntings and of sorcery be true.
They say that flames, lit by no mortal hand,
Are seen here in the first warm nights of spring ;
And that the dead in legions numberless
March to the temple through autumnal mists ;
The tales they tell are many, many, many,
Of visions, and of elfin voices heard.
Lately new rumours to the village came
Of how the ancient gods had been dethroned.
And wandered homeless in the haunts of men
Of how the elves of meadow and of wood
Begged Proserpine to come and be their Queen.
Some say in this green cirque of cypresses,
Before the temple on Midsummer Night,
The faëry people worship Proserpine ;
That mortals who behold this mystery
Must die within the year. And Rosalind,
One of the suppliants, saw the shadowy dance ;
The elves like fireflies twinkled in the grass,
And Proserpine walked down the temple steps
In youthful grace and darkling majesty.

(ROSEMARY *enters from the temple. She
remains on the steps and sings.*)

*I came with the swallow and with the swallow I go,
Nevermore shall I see you, friend ;
Softly over whatever was here the waters flow,
The evening has come and the end.*

*The hemlock flute in the spring and the grasshopper's
song*

*For ever shall sound in your dream ;
My dream is dark, my dream is silent, my dream is
long,
By the reeds of the sable stream.*

THE PRINCE.

Who is this maiden singing a strange tune ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

We call her Rosemary. A maiden strange
And wistful even as her sad slow song.
She came with the wild tulips in the spring ;
We know not whence—she never told her story.
She loves the temple ; every day she brings
Bright garlands and a sacrifice of flowers
Unto the altar. Day and night she comes ;
She sleeps within the temple's dreadful courts
Unterrified, and heedless of the dark.
We love her ; for her ways are soft and gentle,
Even as the flute-like sadness of her song,
And the great liquid deeps of her dark eyes.
She is the priestess of the sanctuary,
And there's a something sacred clings to her,
A secret majesty, a royal fervour.
The villagers with mingled fear and love
Regard her, though some say she is a witch,
Others that she was born in faëryland.

Yet they are glad she offers sacrifice,
Deeming it brings good fortune to the place.

(ROSEMARY comes down the steps).

LILY OF THE VALLEY *(to the Prince)*:
I leave you. Yet beware; for twilight falls.

(She goes up the temple steps).

ROSEMARY.

Are you a suppliant?

THE PRINCE.

No, by chance I found
The temple. I am for a neighbouring place:
The sea-girt city of King Pharamond.

ROSEMARY.

His daughter is the fairest in the land.

THE PRINCE.

So it is said.

ROSEMARY.

Beyond all mortal beauty.
She is the first-born rose of summertide,
With heart of fire, and petals of pale dawn;
He who beholds her loves her until death.
Ah! bright the lot of mortals born to love!

THE PRINCE.

Is not your lot to love?

ROSEMARY.

My lot is dark ;
Alien to mortal joy my destiny.

THE PRINCE.

May you not love ?

ROSEMARY.

Unearthly is my fate.
I serve a jealous goddess.

THE PRINCE.

Mortals say
The gods have been dethroned and cast from
Heaven.

ROSEMARY.

Immortal are the gods ; though cast from Heaven.
They still shall find on earth a dwelling-place.
Albeit men forsake the broken altars,
And seek strange gods and raise new images,
Yet shall the ancient gods endure, nor pass.
So long as men shall live and men shall die
So long in majesty shall Proserpine
Await their shades beyond the Stygian stream.

THE PRINCE.

Though all mankind should follow the new gods,
I still shall kneel and worship Proserpine !

ROSEMARY.

Why do you kneel and worship Proserpine ?

THE PRINCE.

What other gods have gifts to give like hers ?
Their gifts are crowns of laurel, myrtle crowns.
I do not need these things ; I yearn and seek.
But Proserpine bestows the great reprieve—
The sleep that hath no ending and no dream.

ROSEMARY.

The sleep is endless ; endless too the dream.

THE PRINCE.

Who knows what lies beyond the gates of Death ?

ROSEMARY.

The pale dominions of Queen Proserpine ;
The waters of white Lethe, where the soul
Washes away remembrance of this earth ;
The endless dream in measureless dim fields,
A life of shadows and a silent world.

THE PRINCE.

My soul is drawn towards that silent world,
And if I could escape the dream of life
I would yield gladly to the dream of death.

ROSEMARY.

There is no springtide in the dream of death.

THE PRINCE.

The dream of life is sultry, brief and loud.

ROSEMARY.

There are no voices in the dream of death.

THE PRINCE.

Life is a garment sewn into the flesh,
Dusty and hot it weighs the body down.

ROSEMARY.

The dream of death is spacious, cool and dark.

THE PRINCE.

The dream of life is full of sorry sights,
And shot with grief and many coloured pain.

ROSEMARY.

There is no sorrow in the dream of death ;
There is no mirth, no laughter, and no song.

THE PRINCE.

How do you know the secrets of the tomb ?

ROSEMARY.

I am the votaress of Proserpine ;
She favours me, she visits me in dreams.
But lieth life, then, heavily on you ?

THE PRINCE.

I know not ; I am haunted by a voice
That comes I know not whence, a silvery voice
That steals towards me over the high hills,

And speaks of spacious cool immensities,
And forests dense and endless aisles of night,
And glassy reaches of a sunless river
Dim and more broad than any earthly sea ;
Of harbours dark, where many silent ships
At anchor ride, and stir not in the night.
A land beyond the sunset and the clouds,
East of the sun and westward of the moon.

ROSEMARY.

East of the sun and westward of the moon
Dwells Proserpine, the sovran of the dusk.

THE PRINCE.

The twilight deepens. See, how tall and strange
The columns gleam against the purple sky.

ROSEMARY.

And presently the moon with her few rays
Will touch their ghostly stature.

THE PRINCE.

Verily

This is a fitting haunt for Proserpine.
When in the dawn I galloped on the hills,
My heart was light with mirth. The cypress
trees,
The darkling place, the temple and the song
Have charmed away the mirth of me, and yet—

And yet the shadow which they bring to me
Is lined with magic, like a wandering tune
Heard in the night, that fills the captive soul
With melancholy which is more than joy.

(*Enter* : THE PRINCE'S SQUIRE).

THE SQUIRE.

The night comes on apace.

THE PRINCE.

We must be stirring.
Farewell, fair priestess ; when you offer praise
And prayer to Proserpine, remember me,
A stranger, who within these haunted precincts
Lingered no longer than a twilight hour,
And forthwith rode away into the night
To come again no more. Farewell.

ROSEMARY.

Farewell.

(THE PRINCE and THE SQUIRE walk up to
the top of the slope on the right. As
they go ROSEMARY sings):

*I came with the swallow, and with the swallow I
go,
Nevermore shall I see you, friend ;*

*Softly over whatever was here the waters flow,
The evening has come and the end.*

*(THE PRINCE and THE SQUIRE disappear
behind the hill. From the Temple a
Chorus of voices is heard singing) :*

The moon has risen in the night of spring,
The sea is marble-smooth, and dark as wine ;
Oh ! hoist on thy dark ship a silver wing,
Come to the slumbering earth, Queen Proserpine.
Bring the swift fireflies, bring the nightingale,
And on the furrowed hills of corn and vine
Scatter red poppies, and wild roses frail,
Upon the slumbering earth, Queen Proserpine.
Come ! Leave the woods and valleys of the night ;
The world is breathless with a hope divine.
A million swallows from the south take flight,
Come, Queen of spring and swallows, Proserpine.
Beneath thy footsteps, like the milky way,
The little twinkling asphodels shall shine ;
With flutes of June and cymbals of glad May,
Come, wake the slumbering earth, Queen Proserpine.

*(The moon rises and lights up the figure
of ROSEMARY, which all at once be-
comes spectral and majestic. A silver
halo shines round her head and a
crown of red flowers is seen in her
hair.)*

SCENE II.

The Palace of KING PHARAMOND.

A large and spacious hall in the palace, looking on to the street. The architecture of the hall is Byzantine; the walls are a dusky gold. Round the room there is a gallery supported by short columns of coloured marble. In the centre there is a great gateway wide open on to the street. Outside a variegated crowd is seen, waiting for the marriage ceremony; they are kept back by halberdiers in parti-coloured dress. It is a bright summer day.

On the RIGHT there is a raised platform where, under a golden dais, two large thrones are placed.

THE KING and THE PRINCESS enter, attended by a squire and three maidens. The King is an old man, dressed in gold and wears, like a Byzantine Emperor, a long train, and a plain gold circlet round his head. The Princess is dressed all in silver, with a white veil).

KING PHARAMOND.

Now let the heralds sound a triple blast
Upon the deafening clarions; beat the cymbals,
Let bearers of the fluttering oriflammes
Form into rank. Let maidens strew the way
With myrtle boughs, with lilies white and red.

THE PRINCESS.

Last night a sybil from the mountains came,
And prayed I would delay the marriage rite;
Ill-starred, she said, was this, the chosen day,
And marked with evil for the Prince and me.
Let all be done to-morrow, for I dreamed
A dream that bodes ill chance and grim event.

THE KING.

Put these sick fancies from thy fearful mind.

THE PRINCESS.

My Lord, I know disaster lies in ambush.

(THE PRINCE *enters R. followed by a train
of courtiers and ladies. He kneels
on one knee to the King*).

THE KING.

The people wait. Let the procession form.

(THE PRINCE *rises. THE KING leads THE
PRINCESS to the throne and they both
seat themselves. The Prince stands*

on the right of the throne. The heralds and the bearers of the oriflammes, followed by men-at-arms, form themselves into ranks. The heralds blow a blast on their trumpets. The Bells of the Cathedral are heard ringing).

A COURTIER.

Pale is the Prince.

ANOTHER COURTIER.

More pale is his betrothed.
Look, clouded are her eyes, and large with fear.

FIRST COURTIER.

Astrologers foretold disastrous happenings;
They read sad presage in the sky last night.

SECOND COURTIER.

A wizard said the marriage should not be.

(From the street come sounds of music. A high wailing chant is heard to the accompaniment of pipes and flutes. A procession of youths and maidens dressed in white draperies and bearing lighted tapers moves up the street. They carry a bier on which lies the body of a young maiden covered with lilies of the valley; and they halt in front of the open door of the palace.)

FIRST COURTIER.

A funeral bars the way to the marriage feast.

SECOND COURTIER.

A dismal omen for a day of joy.

(Outside the maidens are heard singing):

CHORUS.

Drop lilies of the valley on her bier,
For Rosalind is dead, fair Rosalind;
Fair as the first white windflower in the wind,
And frail as the first windflower of the year.

Her smile was like the foam before a wave,
Like water lit by stars her slow grey eyes;
Her sisters were the dancing dragonflies,
And now the wingéd moths shall haunt her grave.

There is no stone shall mark her grassy tomb,
But once a year, when dies the early bloom,
The cherry tree shall mourn for her, and shed
Frail tears, and softly shall the petals lie,
And softly fall, and falling seem to sigh:
"Fair Rosalind, frail Rosalind, is dead."

*The Maidens form a circle round the
bier and drop flowers on it.*

C

She has gone down into the sunless day,
There where the beckoning springtime never
comes,
To scentless fields, where the bee never hums,
To silent woods and skies for ever grey.

Ah! weep, for she was young and she was fair;
She was athirst for sunshine and for mirth,
For the glad sights and sounds of the sweet
earth,
And now she wanders cold in the pale air.

Have pity on the shade of Rosalind,
She stretches out her hands in vain regret,
For in thy kingdom there is no west wind,
No wheat nor any roses and no vine;
She loved these things; grant that she may
forget,
And drown her dreams in sleep, calm Proserpine.

*The Mourners raise the bier and form
into procession once more.*

(A single voice is heard singing):

*I came with the swallow and with the swallow I go,
Nevermore shall I see you, friend;
Softly over whatever was here the waters flow;
The evening has come and the end.*

*The hemlock flute in the spring and the grasshopper's
song,*

For ever will sound in your dream ;

*My dream is dark, my dream is silent, my dream is
long,*

By the reeds of the sable stream.

(THE PRINCE starts, and, like a man in a dream, he walks to the gateway opening on the street and walks out and mingles with the mourners ; the funeral chant continues and the PRINCE disappears. THE PRINCESS turns pale, the KING and the courtiers stare at the PRINCE as he goes in silent amazement. A cloud seems to come over the sun and the whole room becomes nearly dark. The procession passes the window, and in the distance the funeral chant and the high piping of flutes are heard dying away.)

ACT II.

The cypress grove by the Temple, as in Act I.

It is summer. The chorus of maidens enters, singing as at the end of the last scene, followed by LILY OF THE VALLEY and THE PRINCE.

CHORUS.

When Rosalind across the dark stream sped,
The shades that wait beside the Stygian stream
Wondered, for never came so fair a ghost ;
They thought the moon had risen in their dream ;
Then softly bowing down, the shadowy host
Sighed : " Rosalind, fair Rosalind, is dead."

Thy slumber is unvisited by dreams ;
Thou hast forgotten the broad hours of noon,
The sunrise and the dusk, the rising moon,
The murmur of the fields, the tinkling streams.

The whistling of the men that mow and reap,
The winepress and the scent of mellow fruit,
The horn upon the hills, the answering flute,
Sweeten no more the softness of thy sleep.

Thou wanderest now amongst the drowsy
flowers,
Tall twinkling asphodels and poppies red ;
On Proserpine's pomegranate thou hast fed,
Thou yearnest now no more for days and hours,
For the forbidden springtime and the showers;—
Thou art contented now amongst the dead.

(THE MAIDENS and LILY OF THE
VALLEY walk into the Temple. THE
PRINCE remains outside. He gazes
at the temple as though dazed.)

THE PRINCE.

Was it a dream, or have I just awaked
From life's brief dream ? Or am I dead indeed ?

(A loud noise of laughter and talk is
heard. A SOLDIER, A MERCHANT,
A JUGGLER, A SHEPHERD, A MONK,
and an OLD MAN enter. They seat
themselves on the grass in front of
the temple. THE PRINCE stands
aside and looks on.)

THE MERCHANT.

This is the place to spend a slumberous noon,
'Tis cool and shady.

THE OLD MAN.

More than cool, 'tis cold.

THE MERCHANT.

Drink of this flagon. It is filled with wine
Potent enough to wake the sleeping dead.

THE JUGGLER.

The dead receive their bellyful of fire.

THE MERCHANT.

The damned.

THE JUGGLER.

The dead, the damned, it is the same.

THE SOLDIER.

Give me the flagon. Wine is for the living.

(He takes a pull at the flask.)

A fiery wine.

THE MERCHANT.

A wine for gods and kings!

To-night there will be need of fiery wine
At the King's table for the funeral feast.

(He laughs.)

They say she wept a bucketful of tears.

THE JUGGLER.

The tears of a Princess are short-lived tears.

THE MERCHANT.

She will not quickly find a wealthier Prince.

THE PRINCE.

Your pardon, sirs, I am from foreign lands ;
Was Pharamond's fair daughter wed to-day ?

THE JUGGLER.

The festival had scarce begun at noon ;
When lo ! the bridegroom fled.

THE PRINCE.

Whither and why ?

THE JUGGLER.

He fled into the crowd ;
He vanished ; wherefore, whither, no man knows.

THE SHEPHERD.

They say he loved her not.

THE MERCHANT.

A Prince's love !
Princes are wedded to maintain their lineage ;
To fortify the state by regal ties,
And to bring gold to empty treasuries.

THE SHEPHERD.

Princes are made of flesh like mortal men.

THE JUGGLER.

Flesh, rotten flesh! the devil's savoury food.

THE PRINCE.

Yet far and wide the minstrels sing the praise
Of the king's daughter.

THE JUGGLER.

Yes, the lass is fair ;
Too fair, too swiftly fair ; the bloom will vanish
As soon as she has grown to womanhood,
And leave her parched and dry. Perchance the
Prince
Guessed at the truth and wisely went away.

THE SHEPHERD.

Nay, beauty such as hers can never die.

THE JUGGLER.

Hark at him! Beauty lasts a fitful hour.
Queen Guenevere, for whom Sir Lancelot
Loved and fought hard, came to that nunnery
Crippled and bowed with ague and chill pains.
And when the knights rode past the convent
gate,
And someone cried: "The nun with snow-white
hair,
Who totters feebly to the cloister well,
Is Guenevere," they laughed his words to scorn.

Iseult of Cornwall once was beautiful,
She loved her Tristram well. Alack! he found
In Brittany, betimes, a fresher face—
Iseult the Lily-handed; he forgot
His former love, although she sailed to him,
Across th' insensate sea, when he lay sick;—
And dying from her face he turned away,
Nor recognized the features of his friend.

THE SHEPHERD.

And yet there is a wondrous thing called Love;
A mystery, a blessed miracle,
A sacrament, most holy, most divine.

THE JUGGLER.

Fools call it love; and the priest calls it sin.
The Devil calls it lust. The Devil knows.
What made the sceptre of Imperial Rome
Fall from the grasp of brave Mark Antony?
Because a wasp-like gypsy stung his flesh,
And in his veins a riotous venom ran
Which maddened him and left him languorous.
A pretty scene! The high-souled warrior
Helpless and crazy as a rudderless ship,
Pinned to a petticoat, while empires crashed.
Regardless of his height and his renown,
And heedless of the fate of ruining worlds,
Languidly drifting to ignoble doom,
To satisfy a royal harlot's lust.

And Helen—what was the rare miracle
Which made fair Helen fly her husband's home,
And mowed, like grass, the chivalry of Greece?
What was the sacrament, the mystery,
That bade false Paris seek a paramour?

(He sings):

Fair Helen wearied of her lord,
And Paris pleased her eye;
He looked at her; she blushed and said:
"Together let us fly."

With Paris Helen ran from home,
She crossed the purple main;
Ten thousand galleys followed her
To bring her home again.

Ten years the bravest sons of Greece
Fought for a woman's shame;
A faithless wife's desire that flared
And died like fickle flame.

They fought beneath the walls of Troy,
They fought for ten years long;
The father died, the child at home
Cursed Helen in his song.

They fought beneath the walls of Troy,
They fought for ten long years.
And husbands died, and wives at home
Cursed Helen in their tears.

They took by stealth the walls of Troy,
They burnt them to the ground ;
They buried Helen's lover deep
Under a heavy mound.

They brought false Helen home again,
And she grew old and grey ;
She mourned in vain her perished charms
Until her dying day.

She met her lover in the shades,
He turned his face aside ;
"I am that Helen whom you loved,
Helen of Troy," she cried.

"Helen of Troy was young and fair,
I know you not," he said ;
The shivering ghost of Helen moaned,
And bowed her royal head.

The Devil laughed and cracked his whip
And said : "As I've heard tell,
On earth ye twain were lovers once :
Be lovers here in Hell.

For nothing now shall part ye twain,
And in the icy place
Paris shall have no other sight
Than Helen's wrinkled face."

THE SOLDIER.

I care not for your Helens and Iseults,
In yonder village there are red-lipped lasses,
Fresh as ripe cherries on the cherry tree,
To meet the warrior who returns from war.
I know a lass as buxom as the maid
Who poured out nectar in the house of Jove.

THE JUGGLER.

Sir Warrior, your philosophy is wise.
A soldier sees in every tavern drab
A Hebe, and the nectar of her lips
Is sweet and leaves no bitterness behind.
The soldier's love is very free from care ;
He shares the sacrament of bird and beast,
And greatly he enjoys the miracle !

THE SOLDIER.

A fig for miracles ! I love a lass,
I love a fight ;—a fig for foolish dreams !

THE MERCHANT.

The greater fools are you who seek the wars,
Endure the hardships of the rough campaign,
And sweat and labour, buffeted and starved,
And win but festering wounds and grisly scars
For all reward, or else untimely die,
So that an idle king may loll at ease
And dwell secure in rooted indolence.

One thing alone is worth the toil of search—
Gold, shining gold, red gold, omnipotent gold ;
For gold brings lovely lasses, foaming wine,
Gilt palaces and gems, and brazen galleys,
Glory and honour and dominion,
Ease, freedom, friends, and every mortal joy.

THE SOLDIER.

We soldiers fight for glory, not for gold.
We fight because we love the clash of steel,
The shock, the charge, the bristling line of battle !
Not all the wealth of Asia buys these things.

THE MERCHANT.

Such things are sought and won by fools alone.

THE SHEPHERD.

But there is something greater than renown,
Than gold, than glory and dominion ;
Love, mortal love ; to him who loves, the world
Is faëryland and then is Paradise.

THE MONK.

Shepherd, your words are true, for power and
glory
Are like the changing mist ; or flakes of snow
That melt and vanish when they touch this earth.

THE JUGGLER.

Yet nothing drags man's soul to certain doom
So swiftly as this love of which you tell.

THE MONK.

I preach not earthly love, but love divine ;
For he who loses all upon this earth
And tramples on his dreams of power and glory,
And stifles longing, lust and all desires,
He finds eternal love, the love of God.
Love infinite that wrappeth up the whole.

THE SHEPHERD.

But, holy man, the love divine you preach
Shields and enfolds a mortal's earthly love,

THE MONK.

My child, the love of mortals is a snare,
A gilded picture painted by the Devil
To lure the soul to everlasting fire.
For lovers in the flesh are doomed and damned
To outer darkness and unending flames.

THE JUGGLER.

And faithless lovers in the fires of Hell
Shall kindle one another's dead desire.

THE SOLDIER.

Our business is to live, as men should live.
When life is ended, God shall deal with us.

THE JUGGLER.

You put away the thought of death ; you shun it.
But there is none who hears unterrified
His footfall and the hissing of his scythe.

THE OLD MAN.

There is a tournament where Death himself
Answers the challenge of a mortal knight,
And meets him in the lists.

THE JUGGLER.

Death wins the fight.

THE OLD MAN.

He who would win needs more than fearlessness.
He must renounce all longing for the day,
Desire the life in death ; thus only he
Who vanquishes and kills his love of life
And longs for Death and for the life in death,
Shall vanquish Death.

THE JUGGLER.

To vanquish Death he dies.
Where is the conquest, what the victory ?

THE OLD MAN.

He who shall vanquish Death shall live and love
In death, and Death shall have no hold on him.

THE JUGGLER.

'Tis better to be vanquished than to win ;
What is the profit for a gibbering ghost,
For rattling bones, to live and love in Hell ?

THE OLD MAN.

I fought myself in that grim tournament.
I loved ; I thought my love was strong as Death ;
But when the trumpets sounded in the lists,
And bony Death came rattling on his steed,
I turned towards the sunny world, and fear,
Fear crept into the corners of my heart ;
I durst not ride into the dreadful lists,
I durst not meet the foe—I was afraid.

THE SOLDIER.

You were no coward to refuse to fight :
The bravest man fears Death.

THE OLD MAN.

I challenged him,
I feared to fight ; I paid the penalty.
Bitter and long has been the punishment ;
I wander restless o'er the changing world,
Aching and weary, and I find no rest,
For Death has shut his gates upon my soul.

THE PRINCE.

But had you fought and failed ?

THE OLD MAN.

I should have died
And found forgetfulness.

THE PRINCE.

And had you vanquished ?

THE OLD MAN.

I still should unforgetful live in Death.

THE JUGGLER.

A living dog is better than a ghost.

THE MONK.

Your talk is blind with error and with sin ;
Repent, and you shall find eternal rest
In Heaven, and everlasting happiness.

THE MERCHANT.

Both Heaven and Hell are here upon the earth.

THE JUGGLER.

Wait till you hear the waving of Death's wings,
The roaring of the furnaces of Hell.

THE SOLDIER.

The sun is high in the heavens, so fare you well ;
I'm for the city, I am for the wars.
To fight the Emperor of the Orient ;
So fare you well. Good luck to you, my friends.

THE MERCHANT.

My argosies await me in the port,
Stout bales of precious stuff, pearls from Ceylon,
Nuggets of metal, tusks of ivory,
And amber and Phœnician spikenard.

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THE MONK.

And I am for the windy pinnacles ;
I go to intercede for your sick souls,
To mortify my flesh, to watch and pray.

THE OLD MAN.

I am once more for, Oh ! the endless road.

THE JUGGLER.

I go to juggle—with the souls of men.

(THE MERCHANT, THE JUGGLER, THE
OLD MAN *and* THE MONK *go down*
behind the hill. THE SHEPHERD *and*
THE PRINCE *remain.* *The Prince*
withdraws into the cypresses by the
temple, where he is half-concealed).

(THE SHEPHERD *sings*) :

The mower at his scythe
Is whistling in the hay ;
The world is fair and blithe,
O heart, keep holiday !
O gaudy month of June,
O vocal noontide-hours,
What care I for thy tune ?
What care I for thy flowers ?
No more I heed the song
Of thrush and calling dove,

For I hear all day long
The cooing note of love.

Upon her casement ledge,
To-day I saw the rose,
I flung across the hedge,
Into her orchard close.

"Thy true love thinks of thee,
She thinks of thee to-day,"
So spake the rose to me.
O heart, keep holiday!

*(The voice of HEARTSEASE is heard
answering):*

True love, I love thee well,
I swear to love thee till I die.
Thy voice is like a bell,
Like morning thy bright eye.

True love, I love thee well,
Thy foot is swift, thine arm is strong;
Thou fear'st not death nor hell,
Thy hand can do no wrong.

True love, I love thee well,
Thine eyes are kind, thy heart is brave;
Together shall we dwell
On earth and in the grave.

(Enter HEARTSEASE).

THE SHEPHERD.

At last, O fairest ! I have waited long.

HEARTSEASE.

I love you ; tell me that you love me true.

THE SHEPHERD.

I love you true, Dear heart ! I love you true.

HEARTSEASE.

If I should die ?

THE SHEPHERD.

Then I should straightway die.

HEARTSEASE.

Or if some black misfortune should befall—
If I grew old and ugly in a night ?

THE SHEPHERD.

My love would kiss away your tears ; to me
You will be you, to-morrow and to-day,
And always, whatsoever fate may bring,
To me for ever you are beautiful.

HEARTSEASE.

Last night I dreamed of you, and every night
I dream of you, and in my last night's dream
We sailed across the ocean in a boat,
We sailed across the sea to faëryland.

THE SHEPHERD.

And there we built a castle on a hill.

HEARTSEASE.

And round the castle there were orchards green.

THE SHEPHERD.

Where silver apples glimmer through the dusk.

HEARTSEASE.

And in the castle there is a tall throne
Whence we look down upon the coloured world.

THE SHEPHERD.

A hundred nightingales shall sing to us,
Sing us to sleep beneath the apple-trees.

HEARTSEASE.

A thousand larks shall wake us in the morn.

THE SHEPHERD.

The elves shall come and crown you with soft
dew,
For you shall be their Queen.

HEARTSEASE.

And you their King.

THE SHEPHERD.

And then, when we grow tired of faëryland,
We shall come back and build a little hut
In Sicily, amidst the corn and vines.

HEARTSEASE.

Or nestling on the cliff by the blue sea.

THE SHEPHERD.

And we shall live together till we die.

HEARTSEASE.

Haply you'll find a fairer lass than me ;
Haply you will forsake me and forget.

THE SHEPHERD.

There is no woman beautiful as you
In the wide world, Oh dear, in all the world !

HEARTSEASE.

And there is none so glorious as my love.
I love you then, my joy, my good delight !

*(From the Temple a sound of singing is
heard).*

HEARTSEASE.

Come, let us go ; I hear the sound of voices.

(They go up into the hills).

THE PRINCE.

First love of mortal men ! Great ecstasy,
And seal of human things ! I dreamt a dream—
Oh ! I shall put away my sullen thought,
I shall go back into the noisy world

And find soft eyes to watch me, and sweet lips
To smile, embracing arms and a warm heart ;
I shall forget my melancholy dream.

*(THE MAIDENS come out of the temple
and walk down behind the hill out
of sight except ROSEMARY, who walks
down the temple steps).*

ROSEMARY.

Why do you linger in this place of shadow ?
Go to the world and find felicity.

THE PRINCE.

Why do you bid me go ?

ROSEMARY.

Because I love you.
I love you, and I fear to do you harm.

THE PRINCE.

At last the veil is lifted from my eyes ;
My deep and burning thirst is quenched at last,
And stilled the fiery restlessness within
That all my life has sore tormented me.
I love you. I have loved you all my life ;
This face has haunted me in countless shapes,
In every sight of earth and sea and sky ;
This voice has haunted me in every sound.
Now all is clear.

ROSEMARY.

Then if you love me, go.

THE PRINCE.

I will not go. My heart's desire is here.
Soft is the shipwreck in this sea of dream.

ROSEMARY.

My love is overshadowed by black wings.

THE PRINCE.

My love is strong enough to conquer Death.

ROSEMARY.

Leave me and seek the Tournament of Life.

THE PRINCE.

I love you for your sorrowful soft eyes,
I love you for your pale unaltered face,
I love you for your wide and dusky hair,
I love you for your voice which is the world's.

ROSEMARY.

I love you, friend, I who have never loved !

THE PRINCE.

Long have I dreamed of you throughout the
world.
Far have I wandered, seeking for this face ;

Ah! I have snatched the mask from many a face,
Yearning to find the twilight-laden eyes
That haunted me and never let me rest ;
Now I have found my dream ; my quest is done.

ROSEMARY.

O heart's desire, I too have sought for you,
I too have sought and found a beckoning dream ;
I must no sooner find than lose my dream.
Alas ! that I should lose the long-sought prize !
Oh ! would this hour could last, that you and I
Might wander in deep woods for evermore,
Lost in the thickets of a leafy gloom.
For you are like the spirit of the woods,
The child of the cool forest and its ways.

THE PRINCE.

And you are like the music of the trees,
The notes of calling flute and mellow horn,
That echo in the woodland far away.

ROSEMARY.

O precious dream, O fugitive frail dream !
O would that you could last ! O would that we
Might hoist your wings for sails, and say farewell
Forever to the harbours of this world.

THE PRINCE.

So shall it be. The vision shall come true.

We shall sail down the estuaries of time,
And reach the ocean of eternity,
East of the sun, and westward of the moon.

ROSEMARY.

No, no, the dream must cease, and you must go.
Dark is my destiny. Ah! question not;
As soon as summer dies, I disappear,
And to my home you cannot follow me,
For I am plighted to one man alone.

THE PRINCE.

Who is the man? Reveal this destiny.
I cannot suffer greater hurt than death.
I cannot leave you now, unless I die.

ROSEMARY.

There is one mortal man whom I may love.
That man must challenge Death and fight with
him;
That man must vanquish Death, and if he fails
He dies, he passes to oblivion;
He wanders, lost to me for evermore.
And many knights have fought for me and fall'n
Thus was I loth to tell the mystery,
Lest, like the others, you should fight and fall.

THE PRINCE.

But I shall challenge Death and vanquish him.

(ROSEMARY looks at THE PRINCE and bows her head).

(In the distance the shepherd's pipe is heard).

ROSEMARY.

The careless shepherd plays upon his reed,
The reapers rest beside the sunburnt corn,
The bee about the lily softly hums,
The maidens dip the pitcher in the well,
Through leafy ways the groaning wagons creak
Drawn by the slow white oxen, and the swain
Upon his fragrant load lies fast asleep.
The heat is twinkling o'er the yellow fields,
A myriad grasshoppers, the croaking frogs
Make music, while the mailed dragonflies
Poise o'er the glassy stream; the world is bright,
The world is joyous, and the world is fair,
And pleasant are the noises of the noon.

THE PRINCE.

I crave the silence of a sunless world.

ROSEMARY.

Sweet is the fragrance of the wild white rose,
The honeysuckle and the new-mown hay.

THE PRINCE.

I crave the scentless slumber-laden flowers.

ROSEMARY.

Soft are the hollow wood-notes of the dove,
And low the flight of swallows in the dusk.

THE PRINCE.

I crave the woods unvexed by noise of wings.

ROSEMARY.

Glad is the sight of scarlet-flaunted fields,
The waving wheat, the dancing corn-flowers,
The summer lightning and the falling stars,
The flickering of the fireflies in the wheat,
The hot green spaces of midsummer darkness.
Can you forego for ever these fair sights ?

THE PRINCE.

The sights I need are mirrored in your eyes.

ROSEMARY.

The sighing of the wind, the whispering sea,
The noise and laughter of the busy street,
The song of lovers and the shepherd's reed.
Can you forego for ever these sweet sounds ?

THE PRINCE.

The sounds I need are echoed in your speech ;
The sights and sounds of life shall pass away,
And in the sunless place, for you and me
There shall be no more life and no more death,

No days, no hours, no seasons and no time,
But only love for all eternity.

(HEARTSEASE *is heard singing behind the trees*):

He came from Palestine last night,
At set of sun he came ;
Behind the casement shone for him
My silver lamp's thin flame.

He had forgot the ancient sign,
And heedless he passed by
The garden, where a year ago
We watched the swallows fly.

I heard him whistle in the lane,
I watched him from my bed,
I saw him pass the garden gate ;
He did not turn his head.

They said that I must surely die
Before the spring had come,
But I knew well that I should live
Until my love came home.

He came from Palestine last night,
And he is glad and well ;
And I have naught to wait for now.
"False love, dear love, farewell !"

ACT III.

The Temple, as in Act I.

It is autumn. The hills are parched by the heat. The distant trees are red, brown and gold. The ground is strewn with fallen leaves. It is late in the afternoon. The sun is low in the heavens. LILY OF THE VALLEY and THE MAIDENS are discovered, moaning on the steps of the temple.

(Enter THE MERCHANT, THE OLD MAN, THE JUGGLER, THE SHEPHERD, and THE SOLDIER).

THE SHEPHERD.

What evil fortune has befallen you,
That you lament together, maidens, so ?

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

Our loved companion, Rosemary, has fled.
She, whom they named the Priestess ; she most
fair,
Most gentle and most sad. Last night together

We brought the dying summer's rusty spoil
Unto the temple, and we left her here
And tarried for her underneath the hill.
For in the temple she'd make melody
Until the set of sun. When twilight fell,
Lo! Rosemary had vanished, vanished too
The flowers upon the altar. Far and near
We sought and called in vain for Rosemary;
Again to-day we searched the country-side,
In vain, for Rosemary has left no trace.

THE SHEPHERD.

Last night when sunset burned beyond the trees,
I met a hooded maiden bearing branches;
She wore a sable robe, but her pale brow
Was garlanded with poppies.

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

Rosemary
Was clad like us in garb of festal colour.

THE SHEPHERD.

Haply she wanders on the windy hills.

THE MERCHANT.

In vain you seek her on the windy hills;
Go to the glittering city: 'tis the place
Where comely maidens find their heart's desire.

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

This temple was the home of Rosemary—
And in this temple was her heart's desire.

THE JUGGLER.

Your search is vain. She will return no more.

THE SOLDIER.

Haply she went to see the tournament.

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

What tournament?

THE SOLDIER.

Within the sea-girt city,
The far-famed tournament of Life and Death
Was fought to-day before King Pharamond.

THE OLD MAN.

And to-day's tournament throughout the world
Shall be renowned until the end of time.
For Death was vanquished by Mortality.

THE SOLDIER.

We soldiers oft need all our bravery
To fight the living; this man fought with Death.

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

Who vanquished Death?

THE OLD MAN.

An unknown knight.

THE MERCHANT.

Some say

It was the lost betrothed of the Princess,
Who fought to win forgiveness and new love.

THE OLD MAN.

That cannot be, for when black-armoured Death
Fell rattling from his steed, a skeleton,
When that loud crash of thunder filled the air,
When the knight took the coal-black plumes of
Death

And marching to the maiden in her place,
Received of her the crown of victory,
With eyes that did not look he grasped the
laurel,

And left the lists. He was so heedless, He ;—
Nor set the leaves upon his conquering brow,
Nor cast one glance upon the peerless face.

THE SHEPHERD.

Haply he loved another, now as then,
I gazed on the Princess, and when the knight
Took with averted eyes the crown of leaves,
A deadly pallor crept across her cheek,
She fell in helpless swoon.

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THE JUGGLER.

O foolish boy,
It was the presence of the kingly fear,
The icy wind which blows from Death's broad
stream,
That overcame her. And it was the sight
Of Death arrayed in armour forged in Hell,
Prancing upon a terrible war-horse, shod
In workshops of the damned, that scared her
thus.

THE OLD MAN.

Perchance. It did not scare the fearless knight.

THE SHEPHERD.

She swooned for joy because the knight had won,
She swooned for sorrow that he went away.

THE JUGGLER.

She swooned for fear of the armed skeleton;
To feel the darkness of the outer place
Where the damned souls wander in agony.

THE SHEPHERD.

There is a quiet place beyond the grave
Where happy souls shall taste felicity.

THE MERCHANT.

Within the grave is darkness and the dust,

And never-ending sleep. The tales of Hell
And Paradise are made to frighten babes.

THE JUGGLER.

There is a place of bartering and no speech.
There you shall traffic with dim merchandise.
For ever shall you pile a hoard that fades,
For ever tell the tale of phantom gold,
And filled for ever with unquenched desire
And despair permanent, you, in that place,
Shall curse the dream that mocks but cannot cease.
There is a place where you, young Sick o' love,
Shall pipe to hags and upon fiery hills.
There is a place where you, tall, soldier-thing,
Shall charge the unsubstantial hosts of night
For ever, and for ever fail to charge,
And know defeat in battles never joined,
And hear such foemen as you shall not see.

THE SOLDIER.

I have fought fairly on this earth ; the gods
Shall fairly deal with me ; unterrified,
At least, the knight who conquered Death himself
Shall dwell in Death's abode.

THE JUGGLER.

O simple soldier,
His of all fates the most unhappy fate !
For he shall die, and that right speedily ;
Upon this world his fortune was despair,
Despair shall be his lot beyond the grave.

THE OLD MAN.

The man who conquers Death, albeit he die,
Is freed for ever from all restlessness.

THE SHEPHERD.

The sun is sinking, and the mist of night
Is full of shapes immortal. It is cold.

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

Methought I heard the voice of Rosemary.

THE JUGGLER.

Far beyond earthly hail is Rosemary !

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

Begone, false juggler ! hateful is your speech,
Loathsome your laughter and the sight of you.
This is a holy place. The shadows fall ;
It is not good for mortals to be here ;
You will offend immortal Proserpine.
Begone, I pray you. Leave me to my grief.

THE SOLDIER.

She speaketh true. Come, sirs, let us be stirring.
Come, leave her to her grief.

THE JUGGLER.

**Your Rosemary
Has haply met a witch's fiery doom.**

THE SHEPHERD (*to Lily of the Valley*):

May the gods bless you and requite your prayer.

*(They all go except LILY OF THE VALLEY,
who walks up to the Temple).*

LILY OF THE VALLEY.

I hear the faëry voices in the wind ;
The evening deepens, the forbidden hour
Is nigh. I must not desecrate the place.
O, Rosemary, come back to me once more ;
O, Proserpine, give back our Rosemary !

(She goes out).

*(PROSERPINE walks from the cypresses on
to the steps in her true shape, in all
her glory and majesty. She is clothed
in dark draperies and wears a wreath
of scarlet poppies. Below the temple
steps the ghosts of the dead rise and
bow down before her, and are heard
singing):*

CHORUS OF GHOSTS.

The swallow seeks the southern land again,
The trees, but not the cypress and the pine,
Are splashed and dyed with autumn's crimson
stain ;
Come back unto thy dead, Queen Proserpine.

The fruit has fallen from the orchard trees,
And on the mountain-ash red berries shine ;

The ship awaits thee and the ghostly breeze :
Come back unto thy dead, Queen Proserpine.

The golden wheat was garnered long ago,
And ended is the harvest of the vine ;
Through ragged woods the winds of autumn
blow ;
Come back unto thy dead, Queen Proserpine.

Forsake the sunburnt hills of Sicily,
The laughter and the song, the flowery shrine.
Hark ! in the wind the wandering spirits sigh :
Come back unto thy dead, Queen Proserpine.

*(THE PRINCE is dazed and dazzled by her
appearance, and kneels before her).*

PROSERPINE.

I am Queen Proserpine whom, till to-day,
You knew but in a mortal guise, and now
Behold in her unclouded majesty
And undiminished splendour ; to the earth
I came with the return of spring, and now
I go, with dying summer, to the dark.

THE PRINCE.

Lady of Darkness, I have conquered Death ;
Here is the Helm of Death, and here the crown.

PROSERPINE.

You do not wear the crown of victory,

The crown of life, which you did nobly win;
What do you crave instead for recompense?

THE PRINCE.

To follow to your everlasting home,
To dwell for ever in the dream of you.
This is the only recompense I crave—
Ah! you know well what is my heart's desire.

PROSERPINE.

In my pale kingdom on a pillared throne,
I shall be far removed from you, for you
Shall dwell amid the myriads of the dead;—
They may not even see my royal face,
And only you, of all the endless host,
Shall forgetful gaze on Proserpine.
Will you receive that for your recompense?

THE PRINCE.

I shall behold your changeless face and dwell
For ever in the dream and sight of you,
For ever in the thought and light of you,
For ever in the shadow of your soul,
For ever in the stillness that is you,
Remembering all that was; far off, but near,
Beyond the reach of Life and Death and Time,
And linked by chains of silent song to you.
And though the rivers and the plains of Hell
Between us lie, if I behold this face,

I shall be one with your wide majesty,
And with your mute and dark dominion one,
One with your pale, your glimmering loveliness,
One with your sorrow endless and divine,
One with the vastness of your silver dream,
One with your deeps of silence infinite,
And one with your eternal life in death.

PROSERPINE.

So shall it be.

THE PRINCE.

Beyond the silent stream
I shall behold you far upon your throne.

PROSERPINE.

So shall it be.

THE PRINCE.

I shall behold your face,
And I shall share the sorrow of your dream,
And you shall feel my infinite desire.

PROSERPINE.

Yet shall we be eternally apart,
Eternally asunder and apart.

THE PRINCE.

Eternally divided and apart.

And yet my soul shall, like a drop of dew,
Dwell in the inmost petals of your soul.

PROSERPINE.

Eternally asunder and yet near,
Together, though eternally apart,
So shall it be, according to your choice.
For you have conquered Death, and you can
choose

The fruit of darkness or the fruit of light,
The apple or the slumberous pomegranate.
So take this apple, take this pomegranate,
Await on earth the footfall of the spring,
Then, when the rapturous earth awakes from
sleep

And calls the summer to make love to her,
Look round and hear the music of the world,
Look round and heed the glory of the world,
The pastures, the fresh woods, the cloudy hills,
The murmurous cities and the smiling sea ;
If on that day you still shall crave the dark,
The silence and the sorrow of my dream,
Taste the pomegranate ; you shall sleep to wake
Within my shadow ; but if smiling life
Be sweet to you, then taste the golden fruit,
You shall forget the dream of Proserpine,
And live contented in the world of men.
And with the spring I shall return once more,

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And I shall love you with a mortal's love,
And you shall love me with a mortal's love,
With all a mortal's ecstasy of love,
With all a mortal's swift forgetfulness.
And when the summer dies, and I once more
Return to my dark realms, you shall forget ;
And, fancy-free, shall seek and find new joy.

THE PRINCE.

And if I taste the other darker fruit,
Will you return with the returning spring ?

PROSERPINE.

I shall be unaware of earth and spring,
I shall forget the vision of the world,
I shall have found the dream I sought on earth ;
And lost and drowned in my eternal dream,
I nevermore shall seek the earth in spring.

CHORUS OF THE DEAD.

Pale Proserpine descends to her dark home,
And bow ye dead, bow down, ye voiceless dead ;
The scentless poppy bends its heavy head,
And silent is the sluggish Stygian foam.

In the dominion of the darkling air
The shivering dead are comfortless and lone,
For Proserpine upon her pillared throne
Heedless beholds perpetual despair.

Pale Proserpine is mournful even as they,
For she remembers sweeter sound and sight ;
In vain she seeks the world in the sweet spring.
Her sojourn there is darkened by Death's wing,
Even as her dream within the halls of night
Is cursed by the remembrance of the day.

PROSERPINE.

Farewell. I go to my dominion,
East of the sun and westward of the moon ;
But you await the coming of the spring.

(PROSERPINE *walks into the temple.* THE
PRINCE *watches her go. When she
has disappeared, he walks up the
steps and, tasting the pomegranate,
falls in mortal slumber.*)

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